



# INVESTING IN ARTISTS

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# ARTISTIC INNOVATION

## Guidelines

(effective February 24, 2026)

The **Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation** program (fka Investing in Artists) supports diverse, Bay Area working artists who are developing **new work** in the **performing or media arts** that pushes the envelope of their creative process, explores new artistic collaborations, and/or supports artistic growth and experimentation that extends the boundaries of their art-making.

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) established the Investing in Artists grant program in 2007 to enhance the working lives of and strengthen the creative support system for California artists working in all disciplines. Since that time, and with the support of The James Irvine Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, CCI has awarded over \$2 million to more than 300 diverse artists across California.

Through the continued support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, CCI is pleased to offer the current cycle of funding (2024 – 2026) for the Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation program for Bay Area performing and media artists. Through a competitive application process conducted over three rounds of funding from 2024 to 2026, approximately eight grants of up to \$9,000 each will be made annually to Bay Area performing and media artists, with Bay Area County eligibility rotating every year.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grants are designed to support diverse Bay Area artists in the **performing and media arts**, which include the disciplines of dance, music, musical theatre, opera, theatre, video, film, and animation, to name a few. Applicants representing a wide range of cultural expressions and artistic practices in the performing and media arts are encouraged to apply.

To be considered for funding, applicants:

- **For the 2026 Round:** Must reside full-time in Marin, Napa, Solano, or Sonoma County when applying and for the duration of the grant period (June 2026 – June 2027).
- Must be an **individual working artist**<sup>1</sup>.
- Must propose a **new project**.
  - *Projects that have already taken place or that will take place before the start of the grant period are ineligible. See the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.*

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this program, eligible “working artists” are defined as adults who have received training in an artistic discipline or tradition, spend ten or more hours a week on their artistic practice, self-define as professional artists, and attempt to derive income from work in which they use their expert artistic practices and skills. While serious artistic activity performed as a hobby or as part of volunteer community service may, in some cases, be considered technically eligible, successful applicants will have demonstrated a history of artistic accomplishment and a sustained commitment to deepening and expanding their artistic work.

- Must have **performed or presented artistic work in a public context**—including online/digital platforms—within the last three years (i.e., since 2023).
- Must be **18 years or older** at the time of the application deadline.

The following are **ineligible** for funding consideration:

- Artist collectives, coops, or collaboratives;
- Nonprofit or fiscally sponsored organizations;
- Group performances or other group-based projects;
- Individuals playing a supportive or “producer” role in developing an individual artist’s work (such as curators, producers, designers, technicians, fabricators, and advisors);
- Full-time or matriculated students;
- Applicants who submit more than one application;
- Incomplete applications and those with inaccessible work samples or other required files; and
- Individuals who have a conflict of interest (family or financial relationship) with the board, staff, or directors of the Center for Cultural Innovation.

### **REVIEW PROCESS & CRITERIA**

CCI will invite panelists who are established field practitioners to review applications and recommend final grant recipients. Additional reviewers may be invited to advise on technical proposals or follow up with applicants to assess artistic practice, context, or work settings.

Panelists will evaluate applications against the following artistic innovation criteria:

- **Readiness:** Clarity, rationale, and readiness of the proposed project, including clearly articulated work plans, collaborators (if applicable) required to carry out the project, and timelines.
- **Critical Juncture:** Evidence that funding is coming at a “critical juncture” in the artist’s career and has the potential for long-term impact. Meaning, the proposed project provides a significant opportunity to “push the artistic boundaries” of their art-making, and funding is arriving at a pivotal time to support the artist’s artistic growth, experimentation, and long-term goals.  
*Applicants must provide a compelling rationale as to why the funding is needed at this particular moment in their artistic career; and*
- **Artistic Achievement:** Demonstrated record of artistic achievement and quality of work.

Panelists will also aim to ensure that recommended grantees reflect the Bay Area’s diverse cultural communities and performing and media arts landscape. To that end, the panel will seek to balance the final grantee pool across factors, which include: geography, disciplines, communities served, and cultural form and/or tradition represented.

### **APPLICATION**

To inform panelists’ assessment of the review criteria, the following application sections are required:

1. **Contact Information & Project Details**
2. **Narrative**
  - a. Project Description (350 words max)
  - b. Collaborators (350 words max)
  - c. Why now? (350 words max)
  - d. Applicant Context (150 words max)
3. **Résumé**
4. **Project Budget**
  - a. Budget Notes (150 words max)

## 5. Work Samples

- a. Only one support material is required; applicants can submit up to three. We strongly recommend at least one video work sample. Panelists will review up to 5 minutes total.
- b. Manuscripts will only be accepted from theatre artists applying as playwrights. Up to ten pages may be uploaded.

## 6. Award Administration Information

## 7. Demographic Survey (Optional)

## 8. Application Certification

An Application Preview (.doc and .pdf versions) is available [here](#). Applicants are encouraged to review it before preparing their narrative responses and the requested materials. The application preview includes important details such as word limits, work sample instructions, and accepted file types.

## TIMELINE

<b>Application Opens</b>	February 24 at 9:00 a.m. PT
<b>Information Session</b>	February 26 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. PT <a href="#">Register Here</a>  <i>Note: If you're unable to attend, a copy of the presentation deck will be posted on CCI's website, and a recording of the session will be available upon request.</i>
<b>Office Hours</b>	March 18 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. PT <a href="#">Register Here</a> March 19 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. PT <a href="#">Register Here</a>  <i>Note: These are not formal presentations, nor will they be recorded. Office Hours are an opportunity to have your questions addressed by CCI staff in real time. We ask that you review the grant guidelines, application preview, and Frequently Asked Questions in advance to ensure everyone's time is used efficiently.</i>
<b>Application Deadline</b>	March 27 at 11:59 a.m. (morning) PT
<b>Application Notifications</b>	June 2, 2026, by 5:00 p.m. PT
<b>Grant Support Period</b>	June 2026 - June 2027

## HOW TO APPLY

Applications will be accepted online from **February 24, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. PT through March 27, 2026, at 11:59 a.m. (morning) PT**. All applicants will be notified about their funding status on June 2, 2026, by 5:00 p.m. PT. Complete applications must be submitted by the deadline—no exceptions will be made. In addition, applications with missing or inaccessible content (e.g., corrupted or password-protected files) will not be reviewed.

Access the IA: Artistic Innovation online application at:  
<https://centerforculturalinnovation.submittable.com/>

Applications will be accepted online ONLY through CCI's Submittable platform. Applicants MUST create an account in Submittable before they can access the grant application. Learn more about using Submittable [here](#).

If you need technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support at: <https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter/>. Submittable's business hours are 9 am – 5 pm MT. They aim to respond within 24 business hours.

#### **GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS**

Grantees must complete a brief final report describing the impact and use of funding (i.e., line item expenses) and provide documentation of the activities supported, such as high-quality images, URLs to relevant press, or video recordings. Reports will be due in June 2027 through Submittable. Further details will be provided in CCI's grant agreement.

#### **QUESTIONS & SUPPORT**

CCI staff are here to help and listen. For assistance, please email us at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) (include IA - Artistic Innovation in the subject line) or call 415.288.0530. You may also schedule a time to speak [here](#). For Deaf applicants and those with hearing loss, contact CCI using the [California Relay Service](#)—our staff is trained in making and receiving these calls.

If you need technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support at: <https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter/>. Submittable's business hours are 9 am – 5 pm MT. They aim to respond within 24 business hours.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant program is made possible with support from:

